

## PARK AVENUE OVERLOOK PLAZA

About eleven thousand years ago, the climate worldwide began to grow warmer and drier. The oceans rose everywhere, and here in the Santa Clara Valley, forests of cypress, fir, and pine dwindled and were supplanted by oak woodlands and grasslands that sustained large grazing animals such as bison, camel, deer, elk, and antelope. The rivers were home to many species of fish including salmon, trout, and blue gill; the bays held an abundance of shellfish.

Riparian habitats like the Guadalupe River always have abundant animal life. While the Guadalupe still supports a wide variety, some species, such as the yellow-frogs, the salt marsh [*marsh*] harvest mouse [*mouse*], and the Chinook salmon are living on the edge of extinction.

A small number of Chinook salmon and Steelhead trout are found here, in the heart of downtown San José. Both are considered indicator species – their level of wellbeing is a sign of the overall health of a stream's ecosystem. To survive, the Chinook must journey from the ocean, where they spend most of their lives, to spawn in their "birth stream." The Chinook salmon in Santa Clara County are fall-run Chinooks, which though not plentiful, are not currently listed as threatened under the Environmental Species Act. After spending anywhere from one to three years at sea, the adult fish migrate upstream, always in the fall. The female lays 2,000-6,000 eggs, and buries them in the gravelly bottom of the river, where the male fertilizes them.